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BLACK FRIDAY

REMAINS A DRAW FOR SHOPPERS

ROBERT COHEN • rcohen@post-dispatch.com

An early-morning line snakes around The Meadows in Lake Saint Louis as shoppers hope to get one of 500 gift cards being given out by management on Friday. The gift card giveaway, with each being worth $25-$50, will continue on Saturday and Sunday.

BY LISA BROWN
St. Louis Post-Dispatch

Lured by a chance to win $250 in gift cards and other prizes, Kayleigh Kullman, 23, showed up at West County Center just after 4 a.m. on Friday.

Kullman, joined by her brother and mother, was among the first in line at the Des Peres mall, where staff handed out leis, reindeer antlers and gift cards as a nearby DJ played heart-pounding music.

"I'm running on adrenaline," said Kullman, a University of Nebraska student home for the Thanksgiving holiday.

West County Center's gift card giveaway and a chance to win a Hawaiian cruise was just one of several promotions designed to get people to come out and spend Black Friday — the day after Thanksgiving — in actual brick-and-mortar stores instead of online.

Those giveaways also attracted Brian Roesch, 33, of the Oakville area, who arrived at West County Center before 5 a.m.

"I used to work at a mall so I know all about the deals," he said. "I just like free stuff."

By 8 a.m., parking lots at West County Center were full, leaving drivers to circle the property, waiting for shoppers to leave. For Black Friday, a parking valet service at the mall increased its staff to 10 drivers to handle the crowd.

"People still love to come to the mall," said Sean Phillips, marketing director for CBL Properties, which owns West County Center, St. Clair Square, Mid Rivers Mall and South County Center. "What we're seeing is people are making shorter shopping trips because of online shopping. A lot of people do their planning online, then come to the mall to try things on and shop."

The parking lot at the St. Louis Galleria in Richmond Heights was also nearly full mid-morning Friday. Several shoppers took refuge on recliners in the middle of the mall, resting their eyes and feet after logging hours of shopping.

To keep them alert, an employee at Nordstrom's Cafe Bisto at the Galleria handed out small cups of Merry Mint

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CHRISTIAN GOODEN • cgooden@post-dispatch.com

Hula dancers Penny Moskus (left) and Jane Blakemore (right) pose Friday for a selfie with Dana Chatman of Overland during a "Black Friday Bash" at West County Mall.

PROTESTERS SHUT DOWN GALLERIA • EVENT PROMOTES BLACK ARTISTS AND BUSINESS OWNERS > A4

Militants attack Egyptian mosque

At least 235 killed; assailants escape

BY BRIAN ROHAN AND SAMY MAGDY
Associated Press

CAIRO • In the deadliest-ever attack by Islamic extremists in Egypt, militants assaulted a crowded mosque Friday during prayers, blasting helpless worshippers with gunfire and rocket-propelled grenades and blocking their escape routes. At least 235 people were killed before the assailants got away.

The attack in the troubled northern part of the Sinai Peninsula targeted a mosque frequented by Sufis, members of a mystic movement within Islam. Islamic militants, including the local affiliate of the Islamic State, consider Sufis to be heretics because of their less literal interpretations of the faith.

The startling bloodshed in the town of Bir al-Abd also wounded at least 109, according to the state news agency. The attack offered the latest sign that, despite more than three years of fighting in Sinai, the Egyptian government has failed to deter an Islamic State-led insurgency.

President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi vowed that the attack "will not go unpunished" and that Egypt would persevere with its war on terrorism. But he did not specify what steps might be taken.

The military and security forces have already been waging a tough campaign against militants in the towns, villages

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IS IT AN EMERGENCY?

Anthem customers may foot bill for ER visits

BY TOM MURPHY
Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS • Alison Wrenne was making waffles for her two young children one morning when abdominal pain forced her to the floor. A neighbor who is a physician assistant urged her to go to the emergency room.

Wrong decision, according to her health insurer. Wrenne was diagnosed with a ruptured ovarian cyst, but Anthem said that wasn't an emergency and stuck her with a $4,110 bill.

"How are you supposed to know that?" said Wrenne, 34, of Lexington, Ky. "I'm not a doctor ... that's what the emergency room is for."

In an effort to curb unnecessary and costly ER visits, the Blue Cross-Blue Shield insurer has told customers in a few U.S. states to go to the hospital only in a real emergency such as a heart attack, stroke and major bleeding — or they could wind up footing the bill.

Anthem, the nation's second-largest insurer, wants patients to consider alternatives such as drugstore clinics, nurse advice hotlines or telemedicine.

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PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ROTH FAMILY

Al Roth plows up land at what had been a "truck farm" in Bellefontaine Neighbors until earlier this month.

Once the cream of the crop, area family farm calls it quits

JOE HOLLEMAN
St. Louis Post-Dispatch

BELLEFONTAINE NEIGHBORS • Al Roth decided after this summer that he wasn't going to sell any more vegetables.

So one day in November, Roth pulled the last of his greens, climbed on his tractor and plowed under most of what remained of his family's 125-year-old "truck farm."

After a lifetime, he called it a day.

"I'm getting too many miles on this body," said Roth, 88, as he sat one afternoon at his kitchen table. "And this was a tough year, let me tell you."

Then like a true farmer, who also worked for 36 years as an electrician, Roth ticked off specifics when asked.

"Cauliflower didn't come up, broccoli went to seed, cabbage

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TODAY
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CLEAR
TOMORROW
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MOSTLY SUNNY
WEATHER
B11

Cashing in

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